

Testimony  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
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John Dempsey Hospital – Our University Hospital  
An academic perspective from two of Connecticut's own

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We are here to ask for your support of **HB 5027 An Act Concerning the University of Connecticut Health Center's Facility Plan**. We are a primary care physician and an Ear Nose Throat specialist at John Dempsey Hospital. We were born in Connecticut, went to medical school at the University of Connecticut, did our residency training at the Health Center and we now both have the privilege of working here. The University of Connecticut's Health Center is our professional home, and John Dempsey Hospital is the hospital where we see and operate on our patients. We are content with our roles at the Health Center as academicians and physician leaders, but nothing is more rewarding than being committed to the education and training of the next generation of physicians who will be in a large part responsible for the healthcare of Connecticut's future generation. There are so many reasons to invest in John Dempsey Hospital and it is our purpose to highlight the most obvious and most urgent.

In our opinion the most valuable aspect of John Dempsey Hospital, the university hospital for the last 35 years, is that it is the "classroom of our future generation". Let us explain, using the analogy that the UConn Health Center and John Dempsey Hospital represent a community of public education. As citizens of Connecticut you can relate to the how valuable public education is and that most of us invest in public education so that our children's future has the potential to be brighter than today. For this "public school community" to be strong and effective, we need a superintendent with a strong vision and we need effective principals who are leaders in the community and oversee the quality of the educational product. We also need excellent teachers who create curriculum, evaluate their students, and create a daily lesson plan. We need thousands of necessary volunteers to help our teachers be successful. We need a classroom dedicated to the teaching of our students.

Here at the University of Connecticut Health Center we have a superintendant, Dr. Laurencin, Dean and Vice President; we have several principals, like the two of us who are in academic leadership positions; we have many wonderful teachers, they are the course directors for medical education and the program directors for the fifty or so

residency/fellowship programs; and we have thousands of necessary volunteers who are vital to our academic community and success in the education of our students and residents. These volunteers work at all of our affiliated hospitals and work in private practices in the community we call Connecticut.

John Dempsey Hospital, our university hospital, is so critical in our analogy because it represents our full time classroom. It is the hospital where our superintendant, our principals, the majority of our teachers practices their discipline; the classroom is one that doesn't focus on profit as its priority. The classroom emphasizes education, research and quality care. We can not be successful principals and teachers without being in an environment that prioritizes the academic mission. That environment is John Dempsey Hospital.

Having both gone through the educational system that is the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and the associated residency programs, we can not emphasize strongly enough that without John Dempsey Hospital the educational product would not be nearly as strong. Without a strong John Dempsey Hospital there is a good chance that many of the key physicians in educational roles, the principals, the teachers in our public school analogy would leave. Then what? Our fine institution would fall to the level of mediocrity. Do we accept mediocrity in training our next generation of physicians? When you bring a family member to see a physician, is mediocre training good enough or would you rather have the physician's training be from your university hospital and part of an outstanding educational environment. The students that we teach will be the ones who will be taking care of your children and your children's children.

John Dempsey Hospital is part of the only academic center in the Hartford community that combines outstanding academics, research, and clinical care under one roof. The citizens of Connecticut benefit from this type of multidisciplinary collaboration amongst physicians and scientists. We continue to need academic hospitals like John Dempsey Hospital that sit at boundary between all three missions that an academic community represents. As a clinician, being across the hall from the outstanding researchers only helps us to collaborate better when patient care is the focus.

The issue of cost has been a primary impetus for the debate over the Health Center status over the last few years. The independent CASE report which was requested by the legislature noted the importance of a strong university hospital and recommended that a new hospital be constructed on the Farmington campus but also recommended this be done in cooperation with area hospitals as partners in the endeavor. The proposal before this committee would keep John Dempsey Hospital strong, while also strengthening the educational connection with our regional partner. It is what the CASE report recommended. We are encouraged by the legislatures support of our mission and look to you to partner with us in supporting the future health care needs of the citizens of Connecticut.

The current proposal before this committee helps the citizens of the state in so many ways. It provides the John Dempsey hospital, the classroom for our future generations of doctors, with the ability to maintain its own financial viability and the financial viability of the State as a whole by increasing jobs and scientific investment. It maintains the outstanding educational product that we expect from our University programs and will produce more physicians that the state vitally needs. It strengthens our educational relationship with our regional health care neighbors. Most importantly it is a proposal whose time has come. It is the right thing to do for the citizens of our state and it a way of insuring that the healthcare available to our children and grandchildren will remain at the highest level. We ask you to support this proposal. Thank you.

